WHIRRAKEE

November 2006 Vol. 27 No. 10

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2006 - 2007

President	Glenise Moors	Mandurang South Road, Sedgwick	54396254
Senior Vice President	Richard Goonan		0423418815
Junior Vice President	Anne Bridley		5449 3479.
Secretary	Anne Bridley		5449 3479.
Minute Secretary	Peter Ellis		
Treasurer	Stuart Fraser	12 Bambara Close, Bendigo	
Membership Officer	Kate Lottkowitz	80 Piccaninny Rd, RSD Strathfieldsaye	5439 3157
Excursion organiser	Richard Goonan		0423418815
Syllabus organiser	Rod Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
	(an assistant's position for the syllabus organiser is still vacant)		
Librarian	Diana Collier	31 Milroy Street, Bendigo	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis and Darren White		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	82 Somerville Street, Bendigo e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Matthew Comer, Bill Holsworth, Darren White, Bob Ruddick, Rod Orr, Jan Orr, Peter Ellis, Ben Goonan, Richard Goonan, Anthony Sheean, Liz Graham

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active group that meets regularly (the Fauna Study Group) and other groups that meet at irregular intervals.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: This group has field excursions and the occasional lecture evening. Please consult the *Whirrakee* for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose meetings or excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 27, No. 10, November 2006

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note:
Now that the Finger Flowers are out, I can't help feeling a little melancholic that the main flowering season is finished already, even though in the University bushland, it has not been a very good season for the small plants. In the experiment, where we bag Golden Wattle flowers at the start of semester with different mesh-size bags, (to see who does the pollinating), no pods resulted at all. I only saw a single sun orchid in the place where we normally have big patches of them and overall, numbers and diversity was down. Some of the timing was very unusual as well. Bendigo wax, for example, came out really late and hung on till the end of semester, with the flowers getting smaller and drier every week. The eucalypts, on the other hand, are continuing to be fantastic with regards to flowering. Why?

Front Page Illustration – Photographer: Rod Orr

This photograph shows the flowers and buds of the mystery mallee described on page 6/7. Another addition to the mallee story…

Short Notices

November Excursion
with Richard Goonan

The November Excursion will be travelling along the Campaspe River, looking for changes in the landscape. Apart from short and interesting walks at various points, a freshwater invertebrate survey is also planned which will give an estimate of river health.
Saturday, November 11 depart 8am
return approx 4pm
For further information call: 0423418815
And...bring your sunscreen and your lunch... and your swimmers and towel, if you are brave enough to go in.
If you travelling o the bus, the cost is $10.00.

Birdfair, Leeton 24-26th November

Exhibitions, birding tours, lecturers including Sean Dooley

Murrumbidgee Wetlands Forum, Leeton, 22-24 November

Contact: Leeton Tourism (02) 6953 6481
www.fivebough.org.au
trust@fivebough.org.au

SEANA campout March 2007

hosted by Geelong Field Naturalists Club
location: Forrest, in the central Otways.

Booking must be early:
A $30 deposit/participant is now due. Make cheques payable to SEANA Inc Autumn 2007 campout, post to ER Southcombe, 4 Peary St, Belmont 3216.

Correction to August Whirrakee, 'An unpublished letter to the 'Advertiser', p.4
In this article, Clive Fisher mentioned Mugga Ironbarks being present in St James Wood Drive. I had added *E. tricarpa* in brackets with a question mark to this, as I thought these trees might be the local ones instead, but Clive has since checked the identification and confirmed them being *E. sideroxylon.*

Fire Operations Plan
For those interested in the new fire operations plan, the club has made several submission with regards to the planned burning in two locations and the habitat of the pink tailed worm lizard at One Tree Hill. If anybody wants to know what has been submitted, contact Rod Orr.

River Red Gum Forest Investigation
The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) has recently completed an inventory of the land use of River Red Gum Forests.

This document, called the 'River Red Gum Forest Investigation' is now available for public discussion and comment. Rod Orr has already attended one meeting as a member of the community reference group in Echuca.
Submissions to the document, particularly with regards to current use of river red gum forests, any interesting areas and any suggestions of continuing or discontinuing current use, can be made until December 7.

After this round of submissions, a set of draft recommendations will be drawn up by VEAC, and these will be available for public comment as well.

The current document can be purchased from 'Information Victoria' in Collins Street, Melbourne ($10.- plus postage). It is also available for public viewing in libraries and DSE offices in the study area (this comes down to Tang Tang which contain some sites of particular interest for BFNC members) and it can also be downloaded from the web from www.veac.vic.gov.au

CGB Natural Environment Strategy

By Ros Woodburn

The City of Greater Bendigo is developing a New Natural Environment Strategy which is a follow on from the 2001 Green Plan. Community input is welcome any time up until early November, after which a draft report will be taking shape. This draft will be out to the public for comment for at least four weeks by the new year (allowing for Christmas break).

A community forum was held on 27/9/06 which attracted about 50 people.
Ideas from the forum included the development of a dedicated environment centre, collaboration with all levels of local education, better use of technology including the world wide web, the creation of habitat corridors to provide a safe haven for wildlife and act as a resource for the community to learn more about the local flora and fauna, improved sustainability practices for Council,s water use and the development of local and domestic production of energy to help reduce the City's ecological footprint.

It was also suggested that there should be more opportunities for local business and industry to be involved in sustainability initiatives and the development of model houses and sub-division designs with above "5 star" ratings would promote a greater awareness in the general community.

The City of Greater Bendigo website will be updated to include a summary of the suggestions at the Forum and the results of the community survey.
There are a number of ways you can be involved.

1. Visit the City's website www.bendigo.vic.gov.au / Council Services / Strategic Planning / Natural Environment Strategy
2. Register your interest in receiving project information by phoning 5434 6275 or emailing: strategicplanning@bendigo.vic.gov.au
3. Talk with your neighbours and raise their awareness of the project and caring for the environment.
4. Provide feedback to the draft Strategy when it is released.

To guide your input are the following questions:
* What opportunities do you see for the City of Greater Bendigo to better manage the natural environment?
* What will success look like?
* What are some specific projects to achieve this?
* Include partnerships which could help.
* What should the new strategy be called?

Feel free to call Ros Woodburn, Environment Planner on 5434 6275

Regent Honeyeater Project Tree Planting Weekend, Benalla, Winton, Lurg 9-10 September

by John Lindner

Introduction

Sue and I recently spent an energetic and fulfilling weekend at Lurg, replanting habitat as part of a successful and long-running such project. About 30 people planted just over 2250 trees and shrubs in the two days.

Our involvement originally stemmed from Kerrie Norris's instigation in 2004, when we accompanied other Bendigo people on our first such weekend. We now make a point of going each year – it's always worth it.
Since then we have discovered more about the project each time, met a wide variety of

stimulating and committed people and done quite bit of spade and muscle work too.

2007 Proposal

In 2007, I would like to organize a group from Bendigo comprising members of the Bendigo Bushwalkers, Bendigo Outdoor Club and the Bendigo Field Naturalists Clubs, to participate in one of the main planting weekends in August-September. If we regularly recreate in or study the natural environment, and perhaps take it for granted, it is not such a big step to participating in a project contributing to its long-term restoration. So please read on to find out what it is all about and perhaps you might come next year.

Description of the Project

The project, now in its twelfth year, encompasses an area of approximately 250 square kilometres lying east of the Hume Freeway and located in the hills of the Winton-Lurg area. An aerial photograph we were shown this year reveals the true paucity of vegetation cover compared to the apparent plentiful cover when viewed at ground level – this situation is typical for just about anywhere in rural Victoria.

The project is organised by a community group and is not part of a government department. Funding to employ a co-ordinator and other staff and for on-ground works comes from government grants and foundations.

Landowners have been gradually convinced that it would be beneficial to release part of their land for revegetation, which of course has multiple benefits apart from fauna habitat – provide shade and shelter for stock and houses, control erosion in drainage lines, enhance visual amenity and thus property values, boost biodiversity in all its dimensions and contribute to natural pest control. The preparation costs of fencing, deep ripping and herbicide spraying are subsidized. The plants are all grown from locally collected seed and housed in a special nursery in Benalla: we have always found the quality of the tube stock to be excellent. The ratio of planting is 50:50 trees to understory, and up to forty species are planted in a mixed association at one time. Survival is around 90%.

The key principals guiding the planting are to firstly protect and enhance the existing few blocks and lines of remnant vegetation (such as along roads and creeks), and secondly create a network of linking corridors between these remnants.

This area is broadly classed as box-ironbark woodland, and in some ways is similar to that at Bendigo, except that there seems to be more undulating and hilly topography and the rainfall is slightly higher. For that little touch of historical spice, it lies on the edge of the Kelly country.

A particularly notable tree is the Red Ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*) which in the north-east is called the Mugga Ironbark – it has distinctive and very attractive blue-grey foliage with the buds and fruits in 5's and 7's as compared to our own Red ironbark (*E. tricarpa*), in which the foliage is a more sombre green and the buds and fruits in 3's. Other box species include Red Box (*E. polyanthemos*), White Box (*E. albens*) and Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*). The understory species include acacias, casuarinas, various members of the daisy and pea families and others.

Target Audiences

Ray Thomas has made a point of personally speaking to clubs and organizations across Victoria, which may have an interest in being involved in hands-on environmental projects. The upshot is that you meet people from a great variety of groups – bushwalking, cycle-touring, conservation and environment, tertiary students and graduates. Four large-scale community planting weekends are held each August-September, and this is where our contribution is welcome. Schools and service groups fill other times in the planting period.

Standard Weekend Organisation

You meet in Benalla or at Winton on the Saturday morning, and travel in convoy to the current site. Ray instructs how the planting should be done and keeps an eagle eye on things to ensure the standard is adhered to thereafter.

Control of weeds, a major aim, is achieved by herbiciding along the rip lines some time before planting and scalping off the weed-bearing soil where each plant goes. Plants are protected from cockatoos, rabbits and wallabies by using 2 litre milk cartons as guards. The planting conditions vary from dry and rocky to damp and clayey, even within the one site. Brief sessions are conducted at refreshment breaks to explain the project, the plants being used and the local fauna.

Planting occurs in four bursts for the rest of the day, with morning and afternoon tea supplied. You bring own lunch for Saturday but a barbeque lunch is supplied on Sunday. The big catering highlight is the Saturday night dinner provided at the Benalla Secondary College kitchen and dining room - a fantastic three-course meal prepared by ladies of the local schools. And you get to yack as hard as you can to all the people you worked with during the day.

You shower at the local heated pool for a gold coin donation and sleep at the local scout and guide hall complex on mattresses provided, or find own accommodation. There is even a bush dance after dinner on Saturday.

In conclusion, your only cost is your fuel to get there and a couple of meals - everything else is provided.

Significance of the Regent Honeyeater

The Regent Honeyeater is the symbol of the project because of its rarity and beauty. The project's long-term aim is to recreate the habitat, which would provide for its foraging needs.

This handsome black and yellow bird once had its stronghold in the wide swathe of the box-ironbark woodlands of Central Victoria, stretching from west of Bendigo to Chiltern in the north-east. It was highly nomadic and erratic in its wanderings in search of suitable nectar flows, but its populations have crashed with the wholesale clearing of the prime habitat on which it relied. Nowadays it is extremely rare or even extinct in Victoria except for occasional sightings in the Chiltern area, but can be found up into NSW, where there is suitable habitat. There are only a few hundred of the species remaining.

It has often been recounted at field naturalist club meetings that they were once common in the Red Ironbarks of Bendigo streets of days long since past. Such large and abundantly flowering trees were removed when streetscapes were "improved" or "modernized".

At the same time, it is recognized that this habitat replacement will benefit other bird and mammal species in the area, which at the moment may range in status from common through to rare. Mammals, which will benefit include the Sugar, Squirrel and Feathertail Gliders, Tuan, Ring-tail Possum and various bat species. Birds which may benefit include the Grey-crowned Babbler, Hooded Robin, Diamond Firetail and many others.

Mystery Mallee

by Rod Orr

Editor's comment: In the 'Notes and Observations' of the September general meeting (October Whirrakee, page 5), Rod Orr mentioned a mystery mallee he and Jan had seen (again) recently. The article below is a more detailed account of the mallee pictured on the front cover this month.

Quite a few years ago, we conducted Environmental Science classes out in the Whipstick along Skylark Road. There, the students would lay out transects and compare the floral diversity of recently cut, cut a decade or more ago and 'never' cut areas.

One question that I was often asked each year we did this, was what mallee was the one with larger leaves and red stems. I'd noticed it growing amongst the other cut mallees (predominantly Green Mallee at the site we often used for student ecological work) many times, over many years, but was never able to find the essential identifiers (buds and fruit) because, of course, these plants were cut down to the ground every year and were never allowed to flower.

The photograph below (taken by Rod Orr) shows the site, where the cut mallee and the unknown mallee grow together

This long-term puzzle may finally be resolved now because Jan and I found several strange, mature mallees around the margins of this cut mallee site, which were flowering at the time of our visit and were plainly seen because the eucalypts around them were either finished flowering or had not commenced.

I took some samples and several photographs of the leaves and stems, buds and fruit, and the overall growth form of the mallee eucalypt (see photo on right).

These have been shown and given to Rodger Elliott and Neville Walsh recently and they are keen to follow this through by speaking to Kevin Rule (who spoke to our club recently).

Stuart Fraser and Eric Wilkinson have also been taken out to see the plants and were also intrigued by their differences from the other surrounding mallees, Green Mallee, Blue Mallee, Bull Mallee, Kamarooka Mallee (I've only seen one plant in this location), and the other eucalypts nearby, Yellow Gum, Red Gum, and Red Ironbark.

Whatever it turns out to be, it is another interesting plant record from this very interesting area of our surrounding forests and will add to the 'Mallee Story' that we have told visitors to the area over the years - we always said that 3 of the mallees grew in this area with the 4th growing together with these 3 in the sections of the Kamarooka Forest to the North and East of this area of the Whipstick. From now on we'll have to claim 5 mallees instead of 4!

The unknown species, showing the typical mallee growth form

Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the Year Ended 31 July 2006-08-28

General Account – Investment Account

Receipts			Expenditure		
Membership		2555.00	Whirrakee Printing		1269.72
Subscriptions		68.00	Whirrakee Post		656.01
Donations		112.00	Membership of Groups		75.00
Interest		524.93	Hall Chairs		779.25
Books 'Tzsaros'		3667.50	Consumer Affairs		36.70
60th Anniversary Dinner		2269.00	DSE Weeds & Pests		7834.45
Hall Chairs		1150.00	Books 'Tzsaros'		2337.09
Excursions		362.00	Bus Hire		592.80
Miscellaneous:			60th Anniversary Dinner		2141.00
Donation (Cockatoo)	91.00		Miscellaneous:		
Refund Cons Vol.	68.20		public Liability Ins.	300.00	
Community Grant	1000.00		Gen Expenditure	190.18	
Total		1159.20	Post Office Box	60.00	
			Book Binding	650.00	
			Hall Cleaning	1150.45	
			Donation (Travel)	100.00	
			Projector Stand	517.00	
			Plants (Nursery)	237.55	
			Advertiser	34.50	
			Audit	200.00	
			60th (Cake)	55.00	
			Bgo Plant Group	478.00	
			Box-ironbark CD	1460.00	
			Photo – copy	20.00	
			Bgo Cater work	102.74	
			Bus Excursions	253.00	5808.42
			Deficit.		21530.44
			Loss for Year		9662.81
		$11867.63			$11867.63

Bank Balance at 1 August 2005		Bank Balance at 31st July 2006	
Cheque A/c	13209.35	Cheque A/c	3546.54
Term Deposit	10072.95	Term Deposit	10072.95
Loss for year	9662.81		
	$13619.49		$13619.49

I have examined the documents and the records supporting the above statements of receipts and expenditure and I am able to report that in my opinion the receipts and expenditure as shown, fairly refects the transactions that have taken place in the bank accounts of the Bendigo Field naturalists Club Inc. during the financial year ended 31 July 2006.

D. D. Wright. C.P. A.

Auditor 1/9/06.

Statement of Accounts and Expenditure for the Year Ended 31st July 2006-08-29

Meeting Hall account

Receipts		Expenditure	
Hall Hire	6610.00	City of Greater Bendigo	8100.00
Donations	2400.00	Hall Maintenance	1627.55
Interest	32.94		9727.55
	$9042.94	Loss for year	684.61
			$9042.94

Bank Balance at 1st August 2005		Bank Balance at 31st July 2006	
Cheque A/c	10500.30	Cheque A/c	9815.69
Loss for year	684.61		
	9815.69		9815.69

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D. D. Wright. C.P. A.

Auditor 1/9/06

Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the Year Ended 31st July 2006

Publication Account – Investment Account

Receipts		Expenditure	
Sales:			
Wildflowers	10.00	Modern Press	660.00
Birds	36.00	Projector	1295.00
Orchids	117.50		
Spiders	124.75		
Mixed Books	495.20		
CD Box – Ironbark	120.00		
Interest	1280.71	Surplus	269.16
Eucalypts	40.00		
	$2224.16		$2224.16

Bank Balance at 1st August 2005		Bank Balance at 31st July 2006	
Cheque A/c	16153.91	Cheque A/c	3423.07
Term Deposit	15818.84	Term Deposit	15818.84
Term Deposit	6500.00	Term Deposit	6500.00
		Term Deposit	13000.00
Surplus for year	269.16		
	$38741.91		$38741.91

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D. D. Wright. C. P. A.

Auditor

1/9/06

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings
Wednesday, November 8 7.30pm
Victor Hurley will be talking about 'A Tale of Two Cockatoos - A Cautionary Tale'

Wednesday, December 13 6.30pm
PLEASE NOTE ...earlier starting time

The December meeting traditionally begins with a dinner. Please bring a dish to share and your own drinks and eating utensils.
The speaker will be Jill McFarland, a member of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC). Jill will talk about her recent trip to the Galapagos Islands (Jill has also just been to Lord Howe Island, so may be we'll get another glimpse of this too).

Excursions
The November Excursion will be travelling along the Campaspe River, looking for changes in the landscape. Apart from short and interesting walks at various points, a freshwater invertebrate survey is also planned which will give an estimate of river health.

Saturday, November 11 depart 8am
return approx 4pm
For further information call Richard Goonan on 0423418815
And...bring your sunscreen and your lunch... and your swimmers and towel, if you are brave enough to go in.
If you travelling o the bus, the cost is $10.00

Fauna Group
This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.
Wednesday, November 22 7.30pm
Mystery topic....all are welcome

Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Advance Notice:
SEANA campout March 2007
hosted by Geelong Field Naturalists Club
location: Forrest, in the central Otways.
Booking must be early:
A $30 deposit/participant is now due. Make cheques payable to SEANA Inc Autumn 2007 campout, post to ER Southcombe, 4 Peary St, Belmont 3216.

New Edition of Box Ironbark CD
The new edition of 'Plants and Animals of the Box-Ironbark Area of Central Victoria' is still available at the usual price of $ 50.

...and **Wildlife of the Box Ironbark Country by Chris Tzaros** is also still available at $ 30.-.
Please contact Bill Holsworth if you are interested in purchasing one of these.

Bendigo Field Naturalists on the web
Any comments about the site are most welcome
http://communitysites.impulse.net.au/bendigofieldnaturalists/fnats.html

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